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THE ISLES OF GREECE  
FROM A PASTEL  
BY A. B. WENZELL



THE WENZELL GIRL

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## AN ARTIST AND HIS WORK.

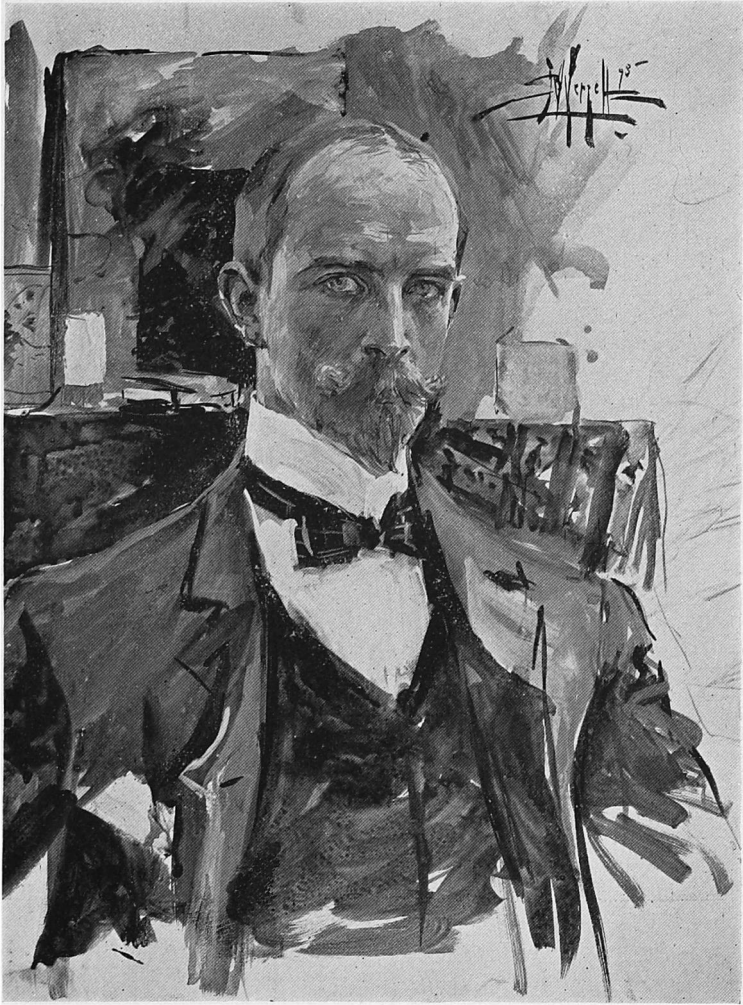
SOMETHING like seven or eight years ago there landed in New York, from a steamer of the North German Lloyd, a young artist who, possessing a total lack of influential friends or money, was in a fair way to find the world a very difficult oyster indeed to open. Yet today that young artist's work is familiar to picture-lovers all over the country, and in an exhibition of pastels and drawings being held in this city may be found excellent proof of what courage and persistence, combined with clever training, may accomplish.

The subject of this sketch, Mr. Albert Beck Wenzell, was born in Detroit, Michigan, some thirty-three years since. He received a common-school education, but an inborn taste for caricature, combined with a lack of proper reverence for teachers (whom he viewed as legitimate prey for his pencil) and an inability to see the necessity for study, shortened his school days very materially. His education as an artist, begun so inauspiciously, was continued at Munich and finished at Paris — so far as tuition is concerned. So far as one may judge from his work and its increasing excellence each year, he has set his ambition in high places.

The success which Mr. Wenzell has attained in his art has not been the result of booming. He has steadily and evenly worked his way into public favor, and has but himself to thank for it. In art, as in literature, there have not been lacking instances of the advantage of published approval, and even patronage. Lamb and Coleridge helped Hogarth, the master of satire; Boileau spoke only good of Molière. But in our own day the followers of art and letters have at times degenerated the process into a "you tickle me and I'll tickle you" confederacy that is far from commendable. All of which makes it exceedingly refreshing to meet with a really independent artist; for whatever popularity Mr. Wenzell has achieved, he certainly has come by it honestly. His work as an illustrator (necessarily circumscribed by conditions) is marked by great originality of treatment. It may be said that he does not even copy himself; or if at all, that amiable weakness is confined to an occasional favorite summer or winter girl, whom we are quite willing to allow him some latitude to perpetuate.

In some of his later work his drawings are taking on a strong and vigorous tone, that promises well for the future, and will afford him a wider range to display his versatility and ability.

Without attempting a critical analysis of the process of gradual transformation which is taking place in Mr. Wenzell's pictures, it may be said generally that few artists have depended so little hitherto on impressionism. His line is always notable for black-and-white drawings, and



PORTRAIT OF A. B. WENZELL, BY HIMSELF.

there is a conspicuous absence of that slurring of detail and reaching after effect which seems an irresistible temptation to many of his brother-

craftsmen. The general run of Mr. Wenzell's drawings speak for themselves and tell their own story. They leave but little to the imagination.

In a set of drawings recently published, however, is found impres-



THE AMERICAN GIRL'S CHOICE, BY A. B. WENZELL.

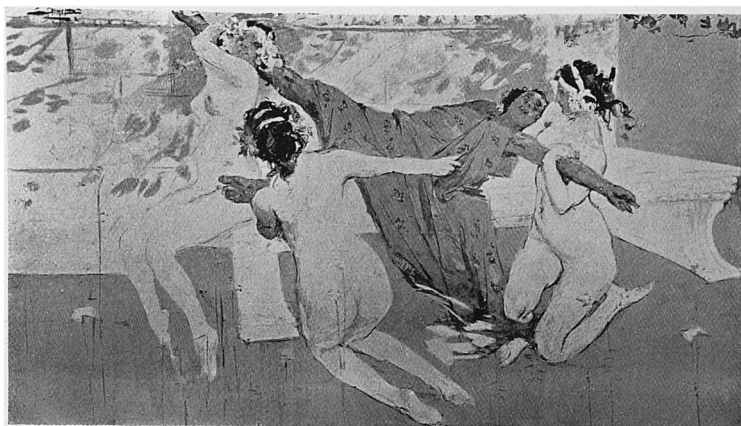
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MOONLIGHT, BY A. B. WENZELL.

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sionism pure and simple. The set comprises four drawings, and was published early in the year. The pictures constituting the set tell a little story of mediæval love, and are good specimens of the artist's work. The first—somewhat tinged with mysticism—serves as a not inappropriate introduction for the touching tragedy that is to follow. The writer has always considered Mr. Wenzell's men rather superior to his women, and finds himself fortified in that opinion by a contemplation of the second picture of the set—a scene full of force and vigor. But the last of the series contains the most striking example of the artist's versatility and skill, and (unfortunately for the above contention) there is in it but the figure of a woman and the armor of a dead man. One is almost tempted to wish that the martial casings of the departed warrior were more comfortably arranged, even to the extent of conforming to the traditional and conventional full-length display, as might easily have been done without interfering with the "balance" of the group. But that is a small matter of detail. The gentleman who in life wore that steel suit (no doubt with heat and abrasions, and possibly with profane reference thereto) and whose body reposes presumably somewhere beneath it, is at peace at last. Neither love nor the "pomp and circumstance of glorious war" concerns him more, and he is relegated to the ranks of secondary considerations. It is with the sorrow of the woman that the picture has to do; and it is a sorrow that appeals to one pleasurably, almost. Her's



MIDSUMMER, BY A. B. WENZELL.

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is not a wild and disheveled anguish; it is the well-bred and decorous grief of a well-groomed gentlewoman, such as the artist delights to portray. The lace-trimmed, brocaded satin gown is perfect fitting and pleasing to the eye, and surely sets off the beauty of the pretty, sorrowing head. The whole figure is thoroughly artistic in itself; the posture and accessories convey the idea of rest and resignation, and the presence of the soft cushion upon which she has been careful to kneel does no violence to that feeling. There is tranquil pleasure in the scene, for apparently the decease of the ladye's knight is not of recent date—which explains matters. But oh, the pity of that little bunch of white roses laid so timidly upon the cold stone! They tell another story of a woman's heart in a language all their own. With a pitiful wail they were placed there, when my lady sank down to her prayerful vigil. Even the beautiful gown is forgotten and forgiven in that bit of clever impressionism.

In sharp contrast is much of Mr. Wenzell's other work; "An Anxious Moment with a Runaway," for instance, and others of that kind. Though the artist has given us little opportunity to judge his skill as an animal painter, the few specimens he has published speak well for his ability in that line. He evidently has a wide knowledge of anatomy.

In common with the productions of many artists whose principal work is illustrations, the scope of which is frequently dictated, the subject matter of such exhibited drawings is always secondary to the interest involved





THE HORSE SHOW, BY A. B. WENZELL.

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in their execution. The ubiquitous and omnipresent art manager has his say, and it is usually final, and it boots nothing that it sometimes inter-

feres with the artist's ambition. Mr. Wenzell's work has underlying it such a healthy and ambitious tone that one instinctively feels that some



THE BACHELOR'S BALL, BY A. B. WENZELL.

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day he will succumb to a latent temptation to discard "fine-bodyism" (however good it may be in itself) and dig down deep into his inner consciousness. Then he will drag out something, not of the beauties of the illustrateds, but which will be stronger and better and hardier, and will



THE OPENING OF THE SEASON  
BY A. B. WENZELL

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live when works of conventionality shall be gathered to the ashheap of oblivion; for his artistic instinct will hold him between the extremes; he



THE NEW YEAR, BY A. B. WENZELL.

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will not "polish the boots of a fighting soldier," nor, on the other hand, put too many toes on his chickens.

Drawings of the class that lead one to the conclusion that hard, emphatic, brawny action will in time dominate Mr. Wenzell's work, are: "In the Bois de Boulogne," "A Pointer from Berlin," and, in fact, nearly all of his German life sketches, and many others that will be self-

apparent to the spectator. The entities are so well preserved in his pictures; his work is so even and honest that when he does conclude to abandon society and fine furniture, we shall be just as sure of artistic results, even though the palette knife jabs deep into the silver coating that covers the back of the shining mirror. His work is evidence of his honesty; his humor is infectious; his satire is kindly; every phase of his output bears the stamp of patient effort and tireless industry. Even if he never varies from the present work of his hand, we shall say contentedly, with Stevenson's traveler, "Thank God!" and put our pipe in our pocket; for the present is good enough. As satirist and moralist, he will map out his own path, and, we rest satisfied, follow it to the end.

In many of the artist's drawings are heads of himself, most cleverly executed, and in one—"Rigors of a Russian Climate"—a full-length portrait, which, *under the circumstances*, must have been an extremely difficult piece of work. If he has not maligned himself, this picture must be considered as representing a most conscientious sacrifice to the exigencies of art.

That humor must be of a kindly brand that is fond of quizzing oneself. But most satirists have been good fellows. Swift wrote nonsense for amusement; Stevenson, most kindly of satirists, wrote ridiculous letters to his friends. And with the pencil, as with the pen, Hogarth, first of illustrators, removed with gentle humor the sting of his sharp probe, and often offered himself for a mark.

CHARLES FRANCIS BOURKE.



#### THE CHICAGO ARTS AND CRAFTS SOCIETY'S EXHIBITION.

ONE of the surprises of the winter has been the exhibition of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society, which, in conjunction with the Architectural Club, recently occupied the south galleries of the Institute. Admirably connected by a similarity of interest, each half of this dual exhibition has been valuable as a manifestation of that continuity of art which few endeavor to trace beyond the application of paint to canvas. Everyone is weary, especially at the end of a winter, with much talk about A—t, so that an exhibition of household articles, simple, broad and free in line, with familiar forms clearly related to definite functions and presenting no problems, came with a freshness and restfulness infinitely grateful. Cups and platters, pots and pans, tables and chairs, though insignificant in their humble ministering, are important articles when considered in the light of the sensitiveness of man's character and the persistency of their effect. We are too accustomed to regard these objects as neglectable quantities, overlooking the sheer persistence which